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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 08/01/07-2

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- 14) US House passes "comfort women" resolution calling for Japanese government's formal apology, another blow to Abe government

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top Play) (Full)
Eve. July 31, 2007

Yasuyuki Oguri, Washington

The US House of Representatives on the afternoon of July 30 (early on July 31, Japan time) passed a resolution calling on the Japanese government to formally apologize to the wartime comfort women. This is the first time that such a resolution has been approved in the history of the United States. Following the Abe administration's setback in Sunday's House of Councillors election, the House's approval of the comfort-women resolution is another blow to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who had hoped the resolution would not be adopted.

The resolution, which was submitted in January by Representative Mike Honda (California), urges the Japanese government to accept the historical fact in a clear manner and to apologize to the comfort women, pointing out that the Japanese government entrusted others to recruit young women for the purpose of making them sex slaves for the Japanese Imperial army.

Support for the resolution increased in the US House of Representative in protest against Abe's comment in March that there was no proof the government coerced women to work in brothels. The House of Representative Foreign Affairs Committee passed the resolution on June 26 with an overwhelming majority. The resolution was sponsored by a total of 167 Democratic and Republican members.

The House took a vote on the resolution by acclamation on June 30. The resolution was unanimously approved as no objection was raised.

Prior to the vote, Democratic Rep. Tom Lantos, chairman of the committee, criticized Japan, saying, "Moves in Japan to distort and deny history and to criticize the victims are nauseating." He sought a formal apology from the Japanese government.

The House of Representatives had planned to take a vote in the

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middle of July, but it delayed it to on July 30 soon after Japan's Upper House election in order to avoid a negative impact on the outcome of the poll.

The expectation is that the House will vote on a resolution playing up the importance of Japan-US alliance also on the 31st, as a gesture of giving a certain level of consideration to the Japanese government.

15) US House rejects Japan's "excuses," approves "comfort women" resolution

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
Eve., July 31, 2007

Yasuyuki Oguri, Washington

Analysis

The United States House of Representatives approved a resolution calling on Japan to offer an apology over the so-called comfort women issue involving its military during World War II. This move presumably reflects the House's irritation at the Japanese side's hesitation in offering a formal apology.

The Japanese government has explained that it has already apologized to former comfort women through a statement issued in 1993 in the name of then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono. But this explanation was simply taken by the House as an "excuse" to refuse to apologize. Besides, there is no doubt that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's remarks denying any "coercion" by the former Imperial Japanese Army helped the US side to become even further distrustful of Japan's attitude toward the historical issues. An opinion advertisement placed in the Washington Post by a group of Japanese lawmakers and intellectuals also fanned the flames of anger in the House.

Furthermore, the fact that the Democratic Party, which is sensitive to human rights issues, took control of the House after last year's midterm election by defeating the Republican Party, which had given consideration to the Japanese government's position, paved the way

for the resolution to be approved. Speaker Nancy Pelosi of the Democratic Party was positive about adopting the resolution. One Democrat said, "The key lay with Speaker Pelosi."

There are many Korean- and Chinese-American voters in the electoral district of Rep. Michael Honda (D-CA), who submitted the resolution to the House. Apparently, Honda introduced the resolution to ensure their support for him. In addition, he obstinately refused to take the chief cabinet secretary statement as an official apology. Emotionally affected by these factors, the House held debate on the resolution. This way of debating appeared problematic.

The Japanese government tried to persuade the House not to approve the resolution by mentioning Japan's contributions to the US government like dispatching Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops to Iraq, but failed. There was also a tendency found in the House to think of the wartime "comfort women" issue separately from the importance of the Japan-US alliance.

At this point in time, many take the view that the passage of the resolution will not rock Japan-US relations. But should the Japanese

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government again make a rebuttal denying coercion, the situation could turn sour and Japan-US relations would rapidly deteriorate. The Abe administration needs to deal with this situation in a cool-headed manner.

16) Rep. Honda: "I hope to see debate on official apology begin in Japan"

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
Eve., July 31, 2007

Yasuyuki Oguri, Washington

The US House of Representatives approved a resolution calling on the Japanese government to offer an official apology over the issue of wartime comfort women. After the session, Rep. Michael Honda (D-CA), the sponsor of the resolution, said to reporters in Congress, "The approval this time sends a strong message to political leaders in Japan." He then called on the Japanese government to offer an official apology in line with the resolution.

Honda emphasized, "We hope Prime Minister Shinzo Abe listens to our friendly advice." Expressing his hope for an official apology, Honda said, "I hope to see debate start in Japan."

"I don't think this has put an end to the issue," Honda said, indicating his intention to continue his efforts for the issue until an official apology is realized.

Meanwhile, Honda stressed, "The resolution is not something to denounce the Japanese public." He asked for the Japanese public's understanding, saying, "If Japan apologizes, Japan-US relations will be further buttressed, and the Japanese people and the Japanese government will receive more praise."

17) "Comfort women" resolution approved by US House; Disputes over historical views likely to continue

MAINICHI (Page 8) (Abridged)
Eve., July 31, 2007

Masaya Oikawa, Washington

The US House of Representatives approved a resolution for the first time calling on Japan to apologize for the issue of wartime comfort women. This fact implies that American people's concerns over Japan's historical perceptions are growing now. Japan and the US are likely to face disputes caused by the differences in historical views in the future as well.

The US government has firmly taken the position that the issue of the "comfort women" resolution has been already settled between the governments of Japan and the US as President George W. Bush said, "I

accept" an apology made by Prime Minister Shinzo during his visit to the US in this April. However, there are still concerns heard in the US about Japan's historical views.

Bush did not interfere in former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine, but he reiterated his strong hope that the historical issue between Japan and China would be resolved. Among the Democrats, who have taken control of the House since last year's midterm election in the US, some are strongly

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concerned about Japan's historical perceptions. The adoption this time of the "comfort women" resolution by the full House may be proof that doubts about Japan's way of dealing with the historical issue exist in the US.

In the US, the so-called comfort women issue is likely to be settled for now, but this does not mean that Japan will not be pursued for its historical issues.

This December will mark the 70th anniversary of the 1937 Nanjing Incident. The Washington Post in its July 12 edition again carried an opinion advertisement endorsing the "comfort women" resolution. The ad, sponsored by pro-Chinese organizations in the US, said, "No good future will come from revisionists' visions." The Chinese society in the US may stage a campaign against Japan.

Meanwhile, there is the concern in the US that the hawks in Japan may gain momentum over the issue of former Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma's controversial comment that America's use of atomic bombs on Japan "couldn't be helped" and may retaliate against the US in connection with the "comfort women" issue, as a congressional source said, "They may call on the US to apologize (over the use of atomic bombs) on the pretext of the human rights issue."

Should protests against the dropping of atomic bombs or air raids on Tokyo during World War II erupt in Japan, that would cast a blight on Japan-US relations. All the more for this reason, the US government is indeed nervous about historical issues involving Japan.

18) US House passes comfort women resolution: Government outwardly remains cool

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
August 1, 2007

The United States House of Representatives approved a resolution on July 30 calling on the Japanese government to officially apologize for the so-called comfort women issue. The government has outwardly remained cool, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki remarking: "It is a resolution passed by the legislature of a foreign country." But it fears that this issue could trigger a new dispute between Japan and the US. The government is now careful so as not to allow the situation to grow complicated.

Prime Minister Abe told the press corps at the Kantei (Prime Minister's Official Residence) last night: "I need to explain to the US Congress my own view and the response measures the Japanese government has so far taken."

During his visit to the US in April, Abe offered an apology to former comfort women. The apology appeared to ward off criticism of Japan. But Japanese suprapartisan likeminded lawmakers ran an advertisement refuting the US resolution in the Washington Post in mid-June. This move prompted Congress to adopt the resolution.

In response to the passage of the resolution, there have been no major moves seen in the government and the ruling camp. Diet members critical of the resolution have also refrained from making any reaction.

Former Education and Science Minister Nariaki Nakayama, chairman of

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the Liberal Democratic Party's "parliamentary group to consider the Japanese future and history education," said: "I think it is quite a regrettable resolution." But he indicated no intention of making a counterargument for the time being. The group has called on the government to review the 1993 statement issued by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono.

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The Kantei has ordered lawmakers to keep silent on the resolution. A government source disclosed: "We have been told that other persons than the prime minister and the chief cabinet secretary should not make any comment."

Behind this instruction, there seems to be concern that reaction could negatively affect the Japan-US alliance. The LDP's crushing defeat in the July 29 House of Councillors election also appears to be working to discourage LDP members from taking any radical action.

After the advertisement refuting the US resolution was carried in the US paper, the Dutch House of Representatives president sent a letter referring to the comfort women issue to Speaker Kono of the House of Representatives. As it stands, the issue could develop into an international problem. Now that the Abe administration is losing momentum due to the devastating defeat in the election, the government is aiming to swiftly put an end to the comfort women issue.

19) Leader who filed a letter of protest: "Our efforts were inadequate"; Doctor who treats PTSD: "Support the comfort women's psychiatric treatment"

ASAHI (Page 22) (Abridged)
July 31, 2007

The US House of Representatives approved a resolution calling on the prime minister to officially apologize over the wartime "comfort women" issue. This newspaper asked a few of the persons involved how Japan should respond.

Upon hearing that the House approved the resolution, Satoru Mizushima (58), president of Nihon Bunka Channel Sakura, commented: "Our efforts were inadequate. We were thwarted by forces that want to divide the US from Japan." On July 13, after the resolution was approved by the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mizushima visited the US Embassy in Tokyo to file a letter of protest in hopes of preventing the approval of the resolution by the full House.

Mizushima, along with some Diet members, formed the "Ianfu Mondai no Rekishiteki Shinjitsu o Motomeru Kai" (Committee Seeking the Truth Regarding the Comfort Women Issue). Their protest letter said, "There were women around the military who serviced the soldiers, but there were no sexual slaves."

Mizushima asserts, "If we do not say anything, it means that we have accepted what the resolution says."

This past June, Professor Masaaki Noda of Kwansei Gakuin University (psychopathology) examined 6 women on Hainan Island who were suffering from psychological trauma. He said, "The US resolution is simply an extension of the resolutions calling for Japan's apology approved by the legislatures of Asian countries."

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Regarding the six women he examined, Noda explained that he saw signs of extreme post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He says the women's traumatizing experiences 60 years ago of having Japanese soldiers break into their homes, take them away, and continuously rape them have caused them to have repeated nightmares and personality changes. "The former comfort women are still suffering today. Japan has a responsibility to support their treatment. Japan cannot continue to ignore the admonishments of other countries."

Regarding the fact that Japanese-American representatives, such as Rep. Mike Honda, were pushing for the approval of the resolution, Akihiko Reizei (48), who lives in the US and is knowledgeable about US societal trends, explained: "(Japanese-Americans) who have cultural roots in Japan feel that they must raise the alarm. They are desperately trying to bring Japan, South Korea, and China to an understanding." Americans of Japanese descent battled against prejudice to reach positions of trust, and along the way, they befriended Americans of Chinese and Korean descent. Reizei comments, "They (Japanese-Americans) are afraid that the trust between them and their Korean- and Chinese-American friends will be lost because of comments by Prime Minister Abe and others regarding comfort women."

Reizei saw the House approve the resolution on live television. "It was very striking to me that several representatives said, 'It is because Japan and the US have unparalleled good relations that we want to point out our good friend's mistakes.'"

20) US House passes resolution praising Japan to balance it with comfort women resolution

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
August 1, 2007

Igarashi, Washington

The United States House of Representatives adopted a resolution praising Japan, stressing the importance of Japan's status as an ally of the US. Republican Jim Saxton submitted the resolution with the aim of balancing it with the resolution calling for Japan's apology over the so-called comfort women issue - passed on July 30 - and underscoring the US Congress's stance of placing importance on the Japan-US alliance. The resolution designates Japan as one of the most reliable security partners of the US, praising Japan's international contributions in Iraq and the Indian Ocean.

In reference to the House's passage of the comfort women resolution, White House Press Secretary Snow said on July 31: "It is not a question about which to support (the House of Representatives or Japan). Japan is an important ally of the US."

SCHIEFFER